

# How to Protect Your Chest After Heart Surgery

After heart surgery, your surgeon has recommended the following rules to protect your chest while it is healing. These are called “sternal precautions”.

**No lifting**  
**No pushing**  
**No pulling**

} anything over 10 pounds (for example, the weight of a bag of potatoes) for a minimum of 6 weeks (unless stated by your doctor)

## How do I get up from a bed or chair?

- To move from lying to sitting, cross your arms over your chest, roll to the side, and gently push up with your elbows.
- To stand, use your leg muscles to push up. Only use your arms for balance.

## What other rules should I follow?

- Keep things close by to avoid reaching too far.
- When grooming and dressing, do not raise your arms above shoulder level. Consider button up shirts. Ask your OT for strategies.
- When moving in your wheelchair, use your legs only and not your arms.
- Always keep a small pillow nearby and hug it if you need to cough or sneeze.
- Do not pull or push to open doors
- Do not push heavily on your walker. Use it mainly for balance.

## How can my caregiver help?

- Do not grab under the armpits when helping to stand or move in bed.
- Ask the staff for help or if you have any questions.

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